

2021 March 21

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Reading:

First: *Jeremiah 31.31-34, "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts." (33b)*

The Psalm: *51, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit." (27)*

Second: *Hebrews 5.7-9, "And he was heard because of his reverent submission." (7c)*

The Gospel: *John 12.20-33, "And where I am, there will my servant be also." (26b)*

Reverent Submission

Jeremiah's prophesy and the reverent submission seen in the letter to the Hebrews today, go together. Jeremiah speaks about God writing a law right into the heart of humans as a new covenant. In fact, God just reminds his people that his law is already written into their hearts. When the Lord set the law of obedience to God in Paradise, it was written into the hearts of Adam and Eve. This writing in the heart is what we call 'conscience' in common parlance. God placed this in every human. Just as any of our physical or mental capability develops and is grows by conscious efforts and habits, conscience also needs to be cultivated, developed, and fostered.

When that process happens along with other growth processes, humans will learn the meaning of reverence and respect, and through these they will submit themselves to the law God writes into their hearts. This law was defied in Paradise by which sin was born on earth. Since the law was defied through disobedience, any rectification of it would be possible only through obedience. That is precisely what Jesus did by submitting himself to obey the will of the Father, which the author of the letter to the Hebrews brings to our attention with the words 'reverent submission'.

Jesus brings this process of submission into his dialogue in the presence of the Greeks, who wanted to have an audience with Jesus. He said that humiliation has to precede glorification. Regeneration is a follow-up of decay. Death should happen first for the resurrection to take place, that is, death is a precondition for resurrection. If there is no death there is no resurrection. That is the meaning of what Jesus speaks about the grain of wheat to fall into the ground and die. He himself is the grain here. It is about his impending death that he speaks. The Greeks came in search of Jesus since they heard about all the great things Jesus spoke and did.

The Greeks were people who liked glorious things, and they could hardly accept humiliation. Jesus takes their presence to confirm his mission of redeeming humanity through a process of humiliation, reverent submission, and finally death. He meant to convince them, his disciples, and the other audiences that real conquest of the world is possible only through conquering one's own self. Submitting and surrendering oneself to God's will makes this process easy and attainable. It must be a conscious and willing act to undergo pain, suffering and death so that it may bring the reward of resurrection. That is done by obeying God's voice, which is heard and recognized in and through a properly developed conscience. This conscience is what Jeremiah points out as writing God's law in the hearts of humans. We must go on kindling it every now and then.

(The readings of the day are given at the beginning. The numbers in parentheses refer to the quotes from them. Good to go through the readings beforehand to properly understand the Reflections)

GREETINGS FOR A JOYOUS FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH.

***Today is the Feast Day of st. Joseph, the Patron Saint of Families, of the Universal Church,
and for a Peaceful Death!***

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